

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 10878

DEPT PASS AID, OPIC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB EAID EAGR EFIN BAGB BDIS BENC EG
SUBJECT: UNLOADING FACILITY FOR BULK GRAIN IN PORT SAID: LABOR
DISPUTE BEHIND PROBLEMS

REF: (A) CAIRO 10382 (B) CAIRO 10406 (C) CAIRO 10592

1. REFTELS INDICATE HISTORY OF LABOR DISSATISFACTIONS IN
CONNECTION WITH PORT SAID OPERATIONS OF MARINE SHIPPING CORP.
IN CONVERSATION WITH LRO JUNE 28, SABET SEFARY, PRESIDENT
OF EGYPTIAN MARINE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION SUGGESTED HIS PRESSURE
ON GOVERNOR PORT SAID AND OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACCOUNTS FOR
REFUSAL ALLOW YANXILAS ENTER PORT AND MATE WITH OBSERVER FOR
UNLOADING.

2. SEFARY SAYS HE OPPOSED TO OPERATION BECAUSE (1) PRESENCE OF
YANXILAS IN PORT WOULD DENY ENTRY FOR UNLOADING TO AT LEAST
TWO OTHER VESSELS, THEREBY KEEPING HIS DOCKWORKERS IDLE AND
COSTING
THEM INCOME; (2) EGYPTIAN COMPANY AT PORT SAID HAS MEANS TO
ACCOMPLISH YANXILAS OFFLOADING, MORE CHEAPLY THAN
MARINE SHIPPING CORP., AND SHOULD THEREFORE BE EMPLOYED INSTEAD
OF AMERICAN COMPANY. IN SEFARY VIEW, HIS MAIN RESPONSIBILITY IS
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TO WELFARE OF UNION MEMBERS AND HE THEREFORE CONSIDERS HIMSELF
OBLIGED TO EXERT ALL POSSIBLE PRESSURE ON GOE, ESPECIALLY
MINISTER OF MARITIME TRANSPORT AND PORT SAID AUTHORITIES,
TO FRUSTRATE YANXILAS ENTRY.

3. SEFARY TOOK PAINS TO STRESS HE UNDERSTANDS IMPORTANCE TO EGYPT OF US INVESTMENT AND IS IN NO SENSE OPPOSED TO IT. HOWEVER, EFFECT ON LOCAL INTERESTS SHOULD BE EXAMINED FULLY BEFORE FOREIGN PROJECTS ALLOWED TO PROCEED. HE PLACES BLAME SQUARELY ON MINSUPPLY TAWFIK FOR UNDERSTANDING ARRANGEMENTS WITH MARINE SHIPPING CORP WITHOUT FULL UNDERSTANDING OF RAMIFICATIONS.

4. SEFARY SAID HE HAD HEARD, BUT COULD NOT CONFIRM, THAT MINMARITIME TRANSPORT HAS ISSUED DEFINITIVE ORDERS TO ALLOW YANXILAS/OBSERVER OPERATION TO PROCEED. SEFARY DOES NOT EXPECT TO WIN BATTLE AGAINST YANXILAS OR SIMILAR VESSELS IN FUTURE.

5. COMMENT: THERE MAY BE MORE TO STORY THAN SEFARY REVEALING. ONE POSSIBILITY WE HAVE HEARD IS THAT ALEXANDRIA PORT INTERESTS ARE NOT WORKING TO INSURE THAT PORT SAID NEVER BECOMES REAL SOURCE OF COMPETITION TO ALREADY BADLY CONGESTED ALEXANDRIA. WE BELIEVE SEFARY IS WRONG ABOUT OBSERVER POSING OBSTACLE TO ENTRY OF OTHER VESSELS TO DOCKS IN PORT SAID. IF HE IS SINCERE, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS THAT NEITHER GOE NOR MARINE SHIPPING HAVE EXPLAINED MATTERS TO HIM EFFECTIVELY. WE WILL RECOMMEND THAT THEY DO SO, BUT WILL ALSO TAKE APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY CORRECT SEFARY'S OBVIOUS MISIMPRESSION THAT UNLOADING WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT PORT SAID STEVEDORES. SEPTTEL REPORTS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT SLANT ON PROBLEM OBTAINED BY AMCONSUL PORT SAID DURING RECENT VISIT TO THAT CITY. EILTS

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